BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 15 FEB 91
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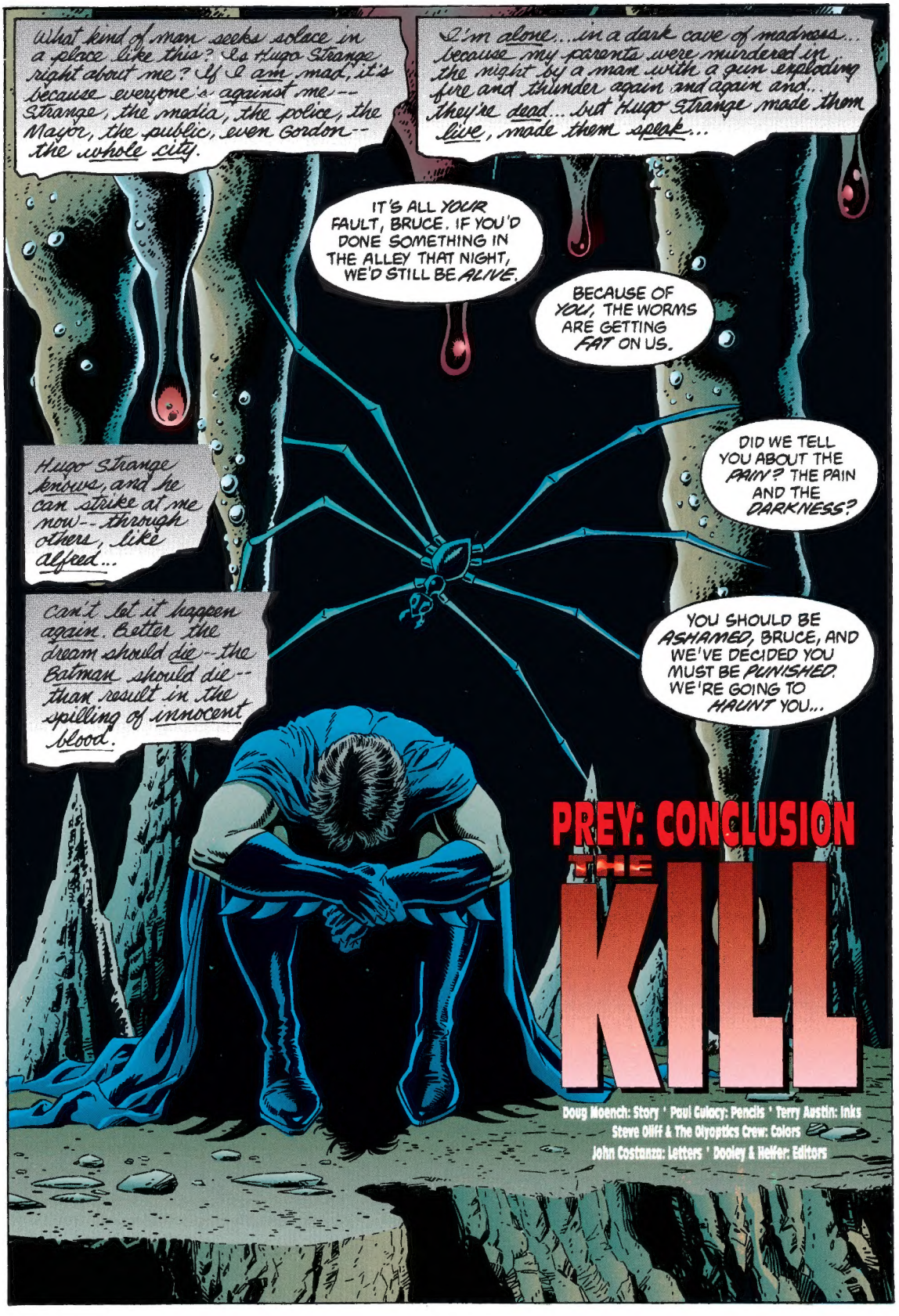
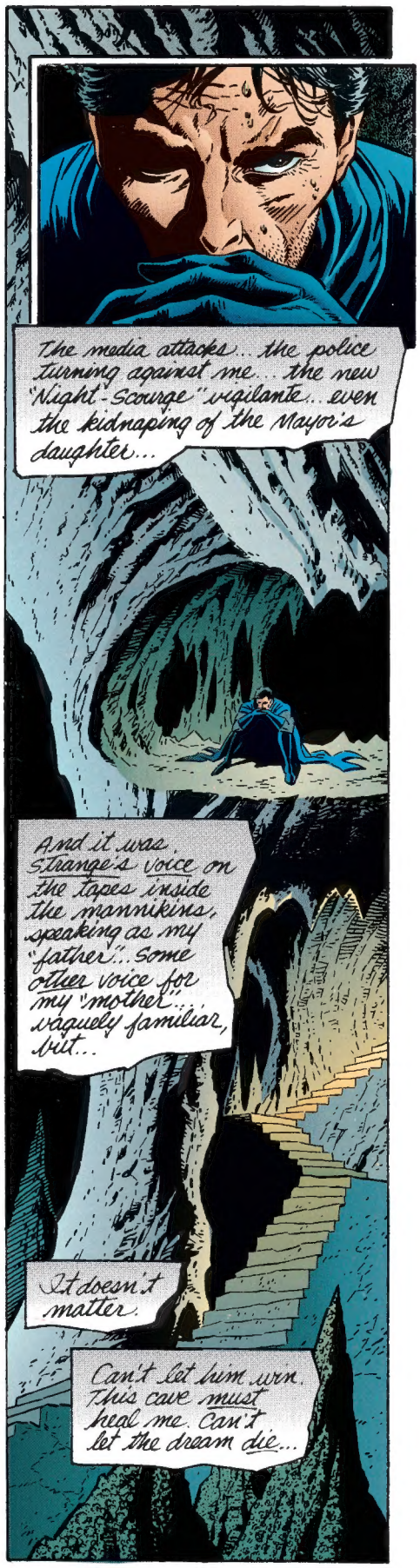
P·R·E·Y
DOUG MOENCH • PAUL GULACY • TERRY AUSTIN
PART FIVE OF FIVE
GULACY·AUSTIN

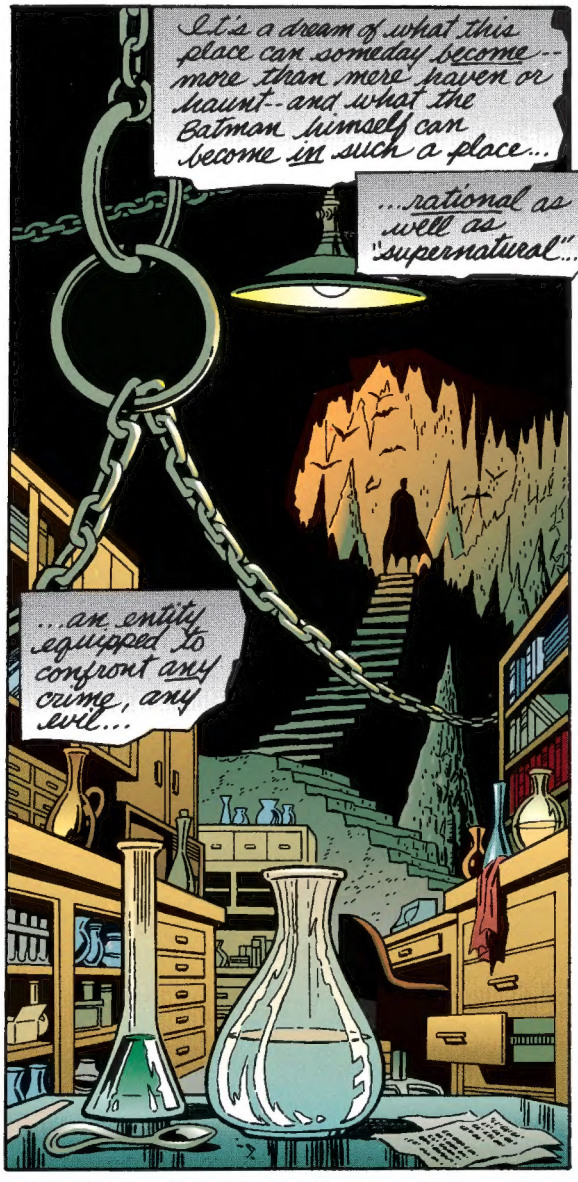

What kind of man seeks solace in a place like this? Is Hugo Strange right about me? If I am mad, it's because everyone's against me--Strange, the media, the police, the Mayor, the public, even Gordon--the whole city.
I'm alone...in a dark cave of madness... because my parents were murdered in the night by a man with a gun exploding fire and thunder again and again and... They're dead... but Hugo Strange made them live, made them speak...
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, BRUCE. IF YOU'D DONE SOMETHING IN THE ALLEY THAT NIGHT, WE'D STILL BE ALIVE.
BECAUSE OF YOU, THE WORMS ARE GETTING FAT ON US.
DID WE TELL YOU ABOUT THE PAIN? THE PAIN AND THE DARKNESS?
Hugo Strange knows, and he can strike at me now--through others, like Alfred...
Can't let it happen again. Better the dream should die--the Batman should die--than result in the spilling of innocent blood.
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED, BRUCE, AND WE'VE DECIDED YOU MUST BE PUNISHED. WE'RE GOING TO HAUNT YOU...
PREY: CONCLUSION
THE KILL
Doug Moench: Story ' Paul Gulacy: Pencils ' Terry Austin: Inks
Steve Oliff & The Olyoptics Crew: Colors
John Costanza: Letters ' Dooley & Helfer: Editors

--AND IN THREE SEPARATE AREAS OF GOTHAM LAST NIGHT, THE MYSTERIOUS NEW VIGILANTE KNOWN AS "NIGHT-SCOURGE" CONTINUED HIS SAVAGE RAMPAGE...
EVEN THOUGH MANY OF THE VICTIMS ARE CONVICTED FELONS--AND ALL ARE AT LEAST SUSPECTED CRIMINALS--POLICE SPOKESMEN DESCRIBE THE ASSAULTS AS "DOWNRIGHT ATROCITIES."
INSPIRATION FOR THE BRUTAL ATTACKS IS BEING ATTRIBUTED TO THE BATMAN, CURRENTLY SOUGHT FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF MAYOR WILSON KLASS'S DAUGHTER CATHERINE.
HOW LONG THE PRESENT STATE OF WANTON LAWLESSNESS WILL CONTINUE, POLICE ARE UNABLE TO PREDICT.

SIR--? DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME YOU--
NOT YET, ALFRED.
JUST REPORT THE BREAK-IN.
TELL THE POLICE ABOUT THE MANNIKINS--EVERYTHING.
COVERING IT UP COULD BE WORSE.
SAY IT MUST BE SOME SICK JOKE--BUT I'M OUT OF TOWN.

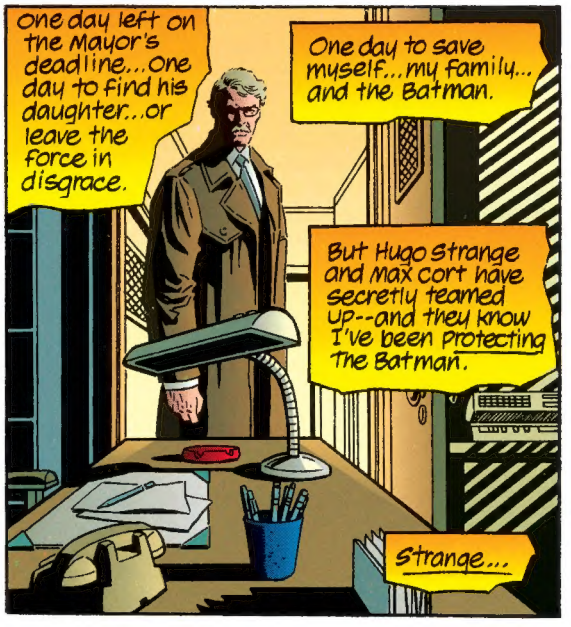
VERY WELL, SIR, BUT PERHAPS THIS CAVE IS NOT THE PROPER PLACE FOR YOU TO RECOVER FROM--
THIS CAVE IS THE ONLY PLACE, ALFRED.
LEAVE ME NOW.
YES, SIR, BUT... PLEASE EAT THIS TIME.
Strange is wrong about me--he must be wrong--and he's behind it all...

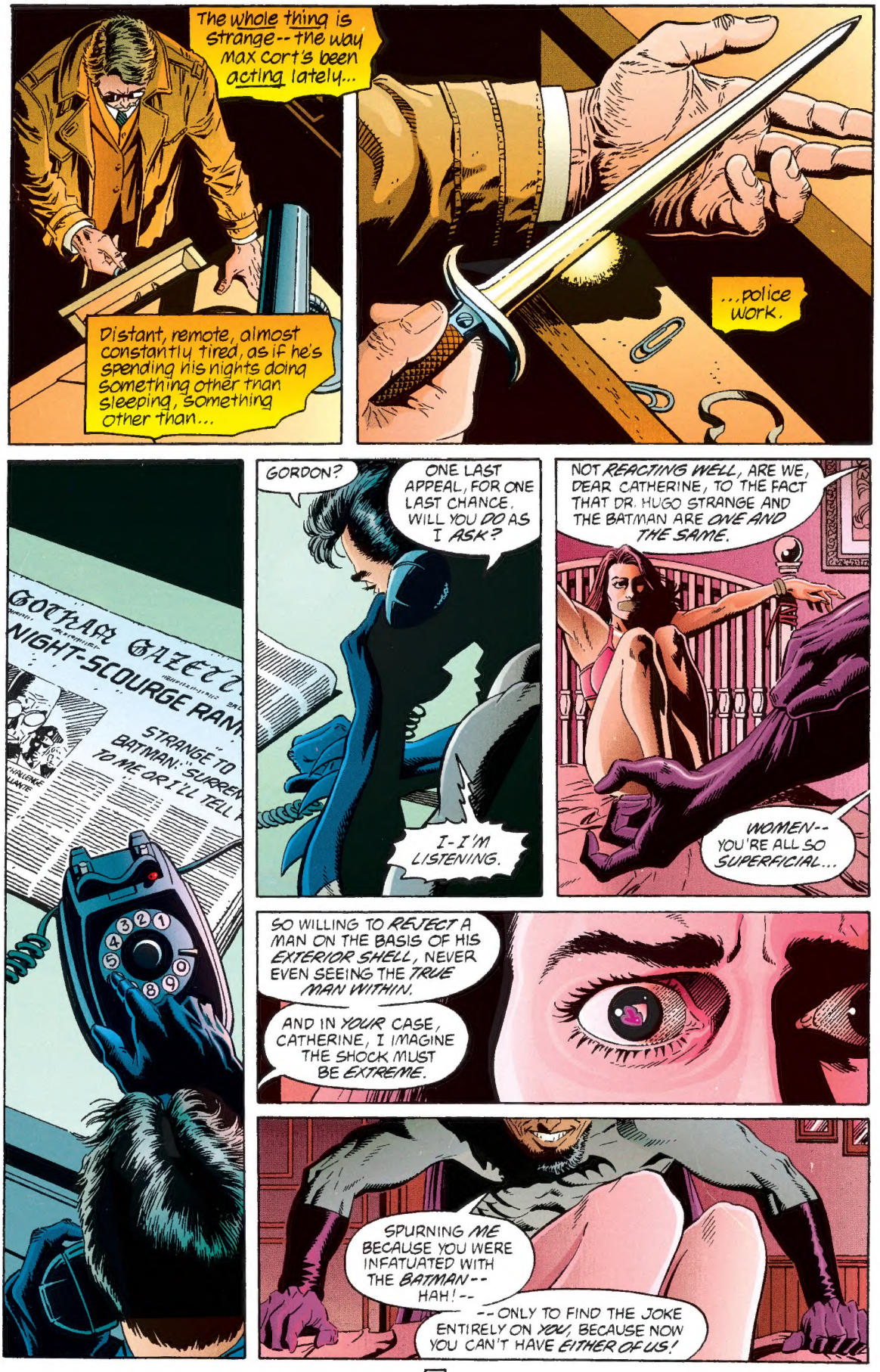

The media attacks.. the police turning against me... the new "Night-Scourge" vigilante.. even the kidnaping of the Mayor's daughter...
And it was Strange's voice on the tapes inside the mannikins, speaking as my "father"... some other voice for my "mother"... vaguely familiar, but...
It doesn't matter.
Can't let him win. This cave must heal me. Can't let the dream die...


It is a dream of what this place can someday become--more than mere haven or haunt--and what the Batman himself can become in such a place...
...rational as well as "supernatural"...
...an entity equipped to confront any crime, any evil...

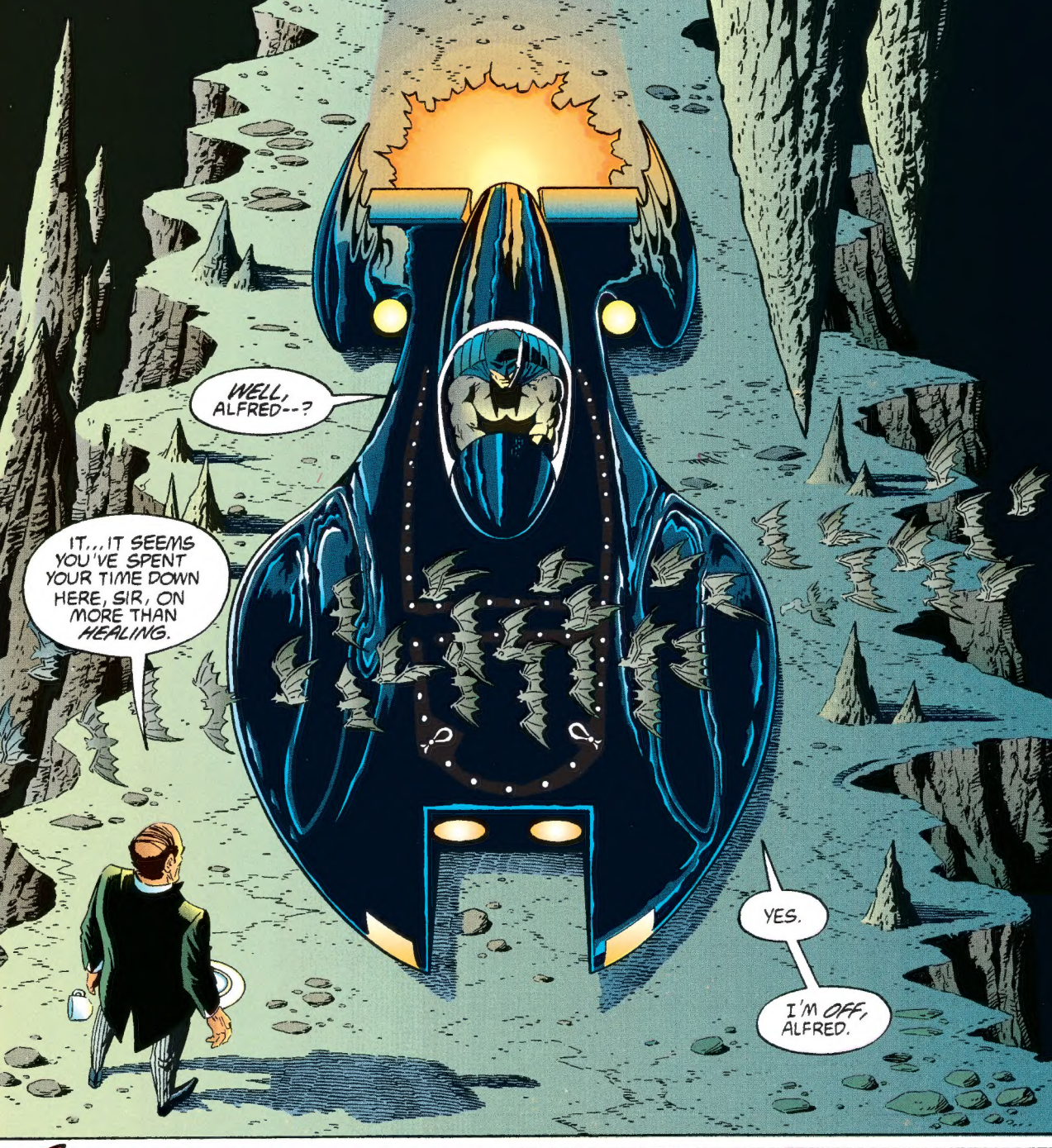
...a man as well as--
The sounds again--the swirling chitter and rush, filling the vast cavern with a thousand shadows made one...
...jagged shreds of darkness stirring in the gloom, soon to emerge into another day's end, their echolocation isolating prey with uncanny precision, blackness swooping from blackness to feed in the vermin-infested night.

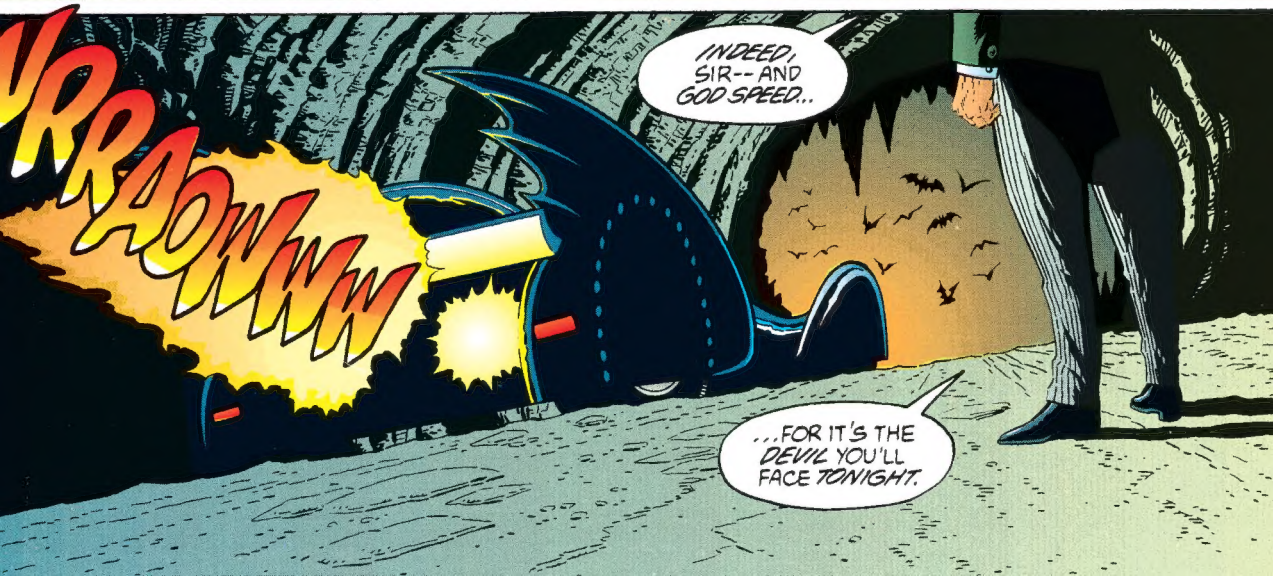
Strange is wrong, and they're right. It's time to feed again, time to get well, and soon... to hunt the dark...
...for my own vermin.

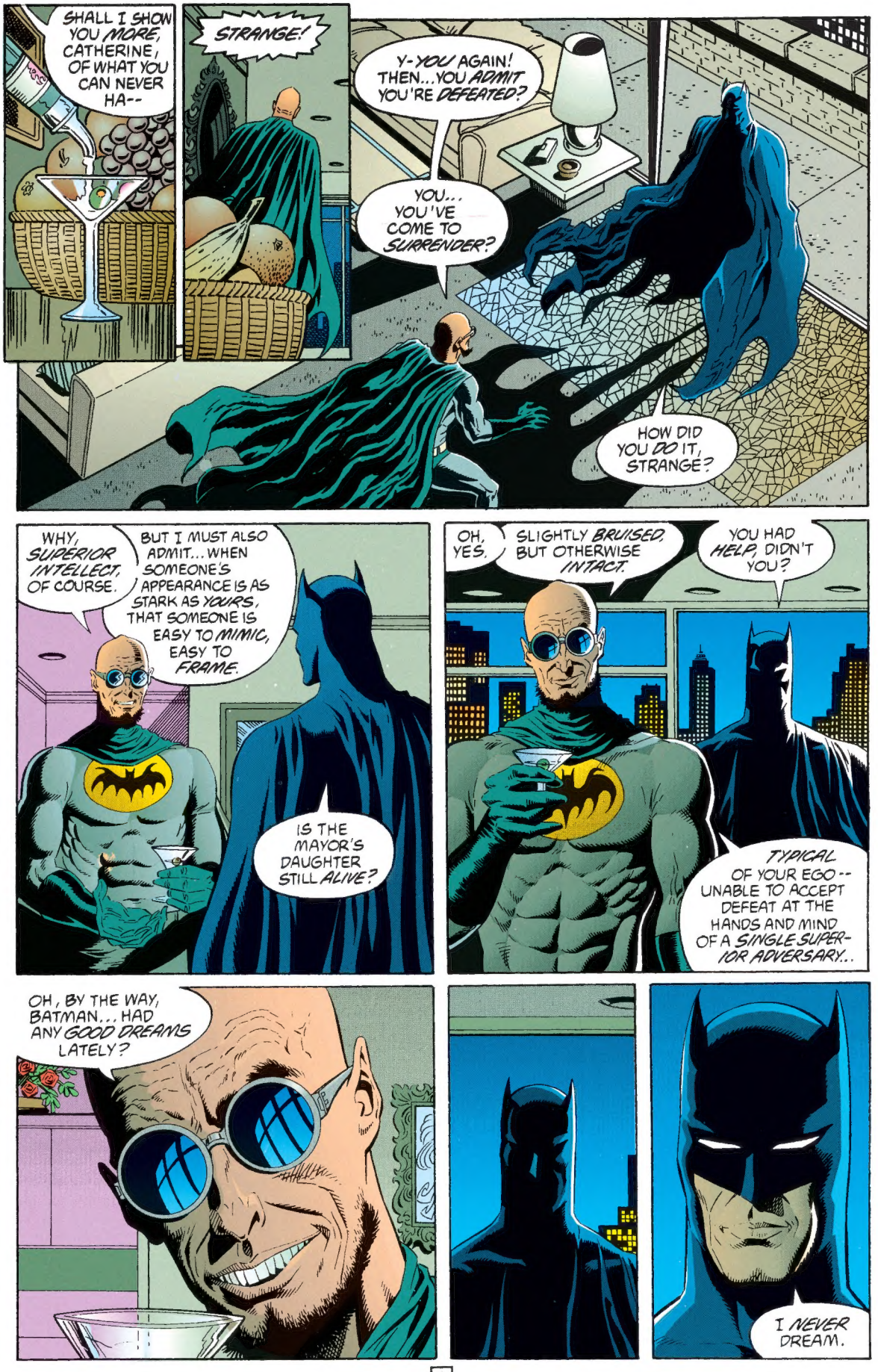

One day left on the Mayor's deadline...One day to find his daughter...or leave the force in disgrace.
One day to save myself...my family...and the Batman.
But Hugo Strange and Max Cort have secretly teamed up--and they know I've been protecting The Batman.
Strange...


The whole thing is strange -- the way Max Cort's been acting lately...
Distant, remote, almost constantly tired, as if he's spending his nights doing something other than sleeping, something other than...
...police work.
GOTHAM GAZETTE
NIGHT-SCOURGE RAM
STRANGE TO BATMAN: SURRE TO ME OR I'LL TELL
GORDON?
ONE LAST APPEAL, FOR ONE LAST CHANCE. WILL YOU DO AS I ASK?
I-I'M LISTENING.
NOT REACTING WELL, ARE WE, DEAR CATHERINE, TO THE FACT THAT DR. HUGO STRANGE AND THE BATMAN ARE ONE AND THE SAME.
WOMEN-- YOU'RE ALL SO SUPERFICIAL...
SO WILLING TO REJECT A MAN ON THE BASIS OF HIS EXTERIOR SHELL, NEVER EVEN SEEING THE TRUE MAN WITHIN.
AND IN YOUR CASE, CATHERINE, I IMAGINE THE SHOCK MUST BE EXTREME.
SPURNING ME BECAUSE YOU WERE INFATUATED WITH THE BATMAN-- HAH!--
--ONLY TO FIND THE JOKE ENTIRELY ON YOU, BECAUSE NOW YOU CAN'T HAVE EITHER OF US!

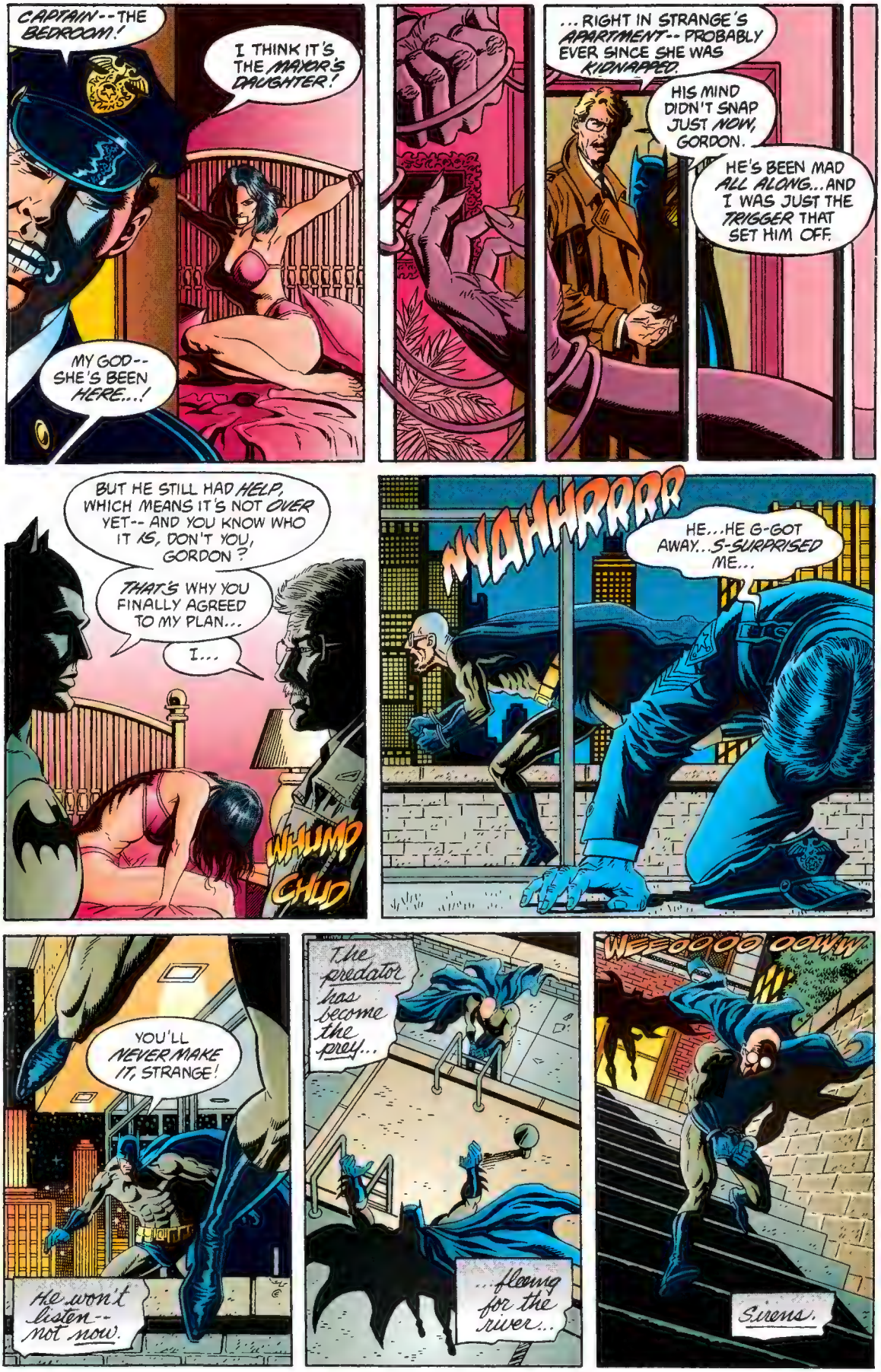
YOU'VE HEARD ME OUT, GORDON.
WILL YOU GO THROUGH WITH IT?
I...
...VERY WELL.
A simple plan -- the oldest in the book -- and a perfect opportunity for betrayal, the perfect chance to bag the Batman and keep my job.
Exactly what the mayor ordered.
only problem is...
CAPTAIN GORDON 701
If I obey, he may never see his daughter again.
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE EATING AGAIN, SIR, BUT IT'S NOW BEEN THREE DAYS.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO--
I'M SORRY, ALFRED, FOR WHAT HAPPENED UP IN THE MANOR.
I...I KNOW YOU ARE, SIR.
AND I'M HEALED AGAIN, ALFRED--I'M READY.
I...KNEW YOU WOULD BE, SIR.
I DARE SAY NOTHING IN THIS CITY CAN STOP YOU...
VRRUUUMMMMM
KFLANG
...NOT FOR LONG.


WELL, ALFRED--?
IT...IT SEEMS YOU'VE SPENT YOUR TIME DOWN HERE, SIR, ON MORE THAN HEALING.
YES.
I'M OFF, ALFRED.


RRAOWWW
INDEED, SIR--AND GOD SPEED..
...FOR IT'S THE DEVIL YOU'LL FACE TONIGHT.


SHALL I SHOW YOU MORE, CATHERINE, OF WHAT YOU CAN NEVER HA--
STRANGE!
Y-YOU AGAIN! THEN...YOU ADMIT YOU'RE DEFEATED?
YOU... YOU'VE COME TO SURRENDER?
HOW DID YOU DO IT, STRANGE?
WHY, SUPERIOR INTELLECT, OF COURSE.
BUT I MUST ALSO ADMIT... WHEN SOMEONE'S APPEARANCE IS AS STARK AS YOURS, THAT SOMEONE IS EASY TO MIMIC, EASY TO FRAME.
IS THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER STILL ALIVE?
OH, YES.
SLIGHTLY BRUISED, BUT OTHERWISE INTACT.
YOU HAD HELP, DIDN'T YOU?
TYPICAL OF YOUR EGO -- UNABLE TO ACCEPT DEFEAT AT THE HANDS AND MIND OF A SINGLE SUPERIOR ADVERSARY...
OH, BY THE WAY, BATMAN... HAD ANY GOOD DREAMS LATELY?
I NEVER DREAM.

OH, COME, COME-- DON'T TRY TO DENY IT!
I KNOW THE SIGHT OF YOUR DEAD MOTHER AND FATHER MUST HAVE--
MY MOTHER AND FATHER LIVE IN PARAGUAY.
YOU'RE LYING-- BECAUSE THE MANNIKINS MUST HAVE AFFECTED YOU!
AND YOU'RE QUITE MAD, DR. STRANGE--BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
HAVE IT YOUR WAY!
BUT AT LEAST YOU ADMIT I CONQUERED YOU!
ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO CALL THE POLICE AND--
SAVE YOUR DIME, DR. STRANGE.
THEN, THE BATMAN WASN'T THE KIDNAPPER.
OF COURSE NOT, OFFICER.
I DUNNO, CAPTAIN, I'M STILL NOT SO SURE ABOUT HIM...
GET BACK! WH-WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS OUTRAGE?!
DR. HUGO STRANGE, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.
CH-KLATCH
YOU HEARD IT ALL, THEN?
EVERY WORD-- OF A BEAUTIFUL CONFESSION.
STILL, SINCE ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION CAN'T HURT...
HERE.
From one of the few mannikins I didn't shatter.
NO... I WON... I CAN'T LOSE... NOT FAIR...
I BEAT HIM... BEAT THE DARK ARCHETYPE...


CAPTAIN--THE BEDROOM!
I THINK IT'S THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER!
MY GOD-- SHE'S BEEN HERE...!
...RIGHT IN STRANGE'S APARTMENT-- PROBABLY EVER SINCE SHE WAS KIDNAPPED.
HIS MIND DIDN'T SNAP JUST NOW, GORDON.
HE'S BEEN MAD ALL ALONG...AND I WAS JUST THE TRIGGER THAT SET HIM OFF.
BUT HE STILL HAD HELP, WHICH MEANS IT'S NOT OVER YET-- AND YOU KNOW WHO IT IS, DON'T YOU, GORDON?
THAT'S WHY YOU FINALLY AGREED TO MY PLAN...
I...
WHUMP
CHUD
NYAHHRRRR
HE...HE G-GOT AWAY...S-SURPRISED ME...
YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT, STRANGE!
He won't listen-- not now.
The predator has become the prey...
...fleeing for the river...
WEEOOOO OOWW
Sirens.

IT'S HIM! THE BAT-VIGILANTE!
CORT SAID SHOOT TO KILL!
HALT!!
STOP OR WE'LL SHOOT!!
NOOOOO
BRAM
BRAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BABAM
BRAM

THEY... THEY GOT HIM?
YES.
THEY THOUGHT HE WAS ME.
BUT IT'S STILL NOT OVER, GORDON.
GET A SPOT-LIGHT ON THE WATER!
WHOEVER HELPED HIM, HE'S THE NIGHT-SCOURGE--
WHO, GORDON? WHO IS HE?
I... I DON'T KNOW... NOT FOR CERTAIN... BUT...
...TRY... MAX CORT.
CHOP SHOP... DOZEN STOLEN CARS...AND THE SUSPECT'S ADDRESS IS A TENEMENT IN THE LOWER EAST QUARTER...
POLICE
WITH SCUM LIKE THAT...
...IT FIGURES.
VRUUUMM
Lost the first one to the police and the river...
...but not this one

He's stepping in the tunnel...
But why here?
Of course.
Gordon was right.
Max Cort is the Night-Scourge...
...and he's on the prowl.
HUNTING FOR SOMEONE?

SHRANK
KANKT
ME TOO.
FWHUF
FFFF
BETTER.
I'M BETTER THAN HIM.
HUGO STRANGE SAID SO.
I'M BETTER THAN THE BATMAN.

HYAHHRRR
PROVE IT.
KRANG
SKING
SKANG

SWUUF
HWOOOOFFO
DROP THE BLADES, CORT.
WHO'S CORT?
I'M THE NIGHT-SCOURGE.
THIS IS YOUR LAST NIGHT.
NO! YOU MOCKED ME IN FRONT OF MY MEN--
--SUCKER-PUNCHED ME!
SWOOOOFF
HWOKK

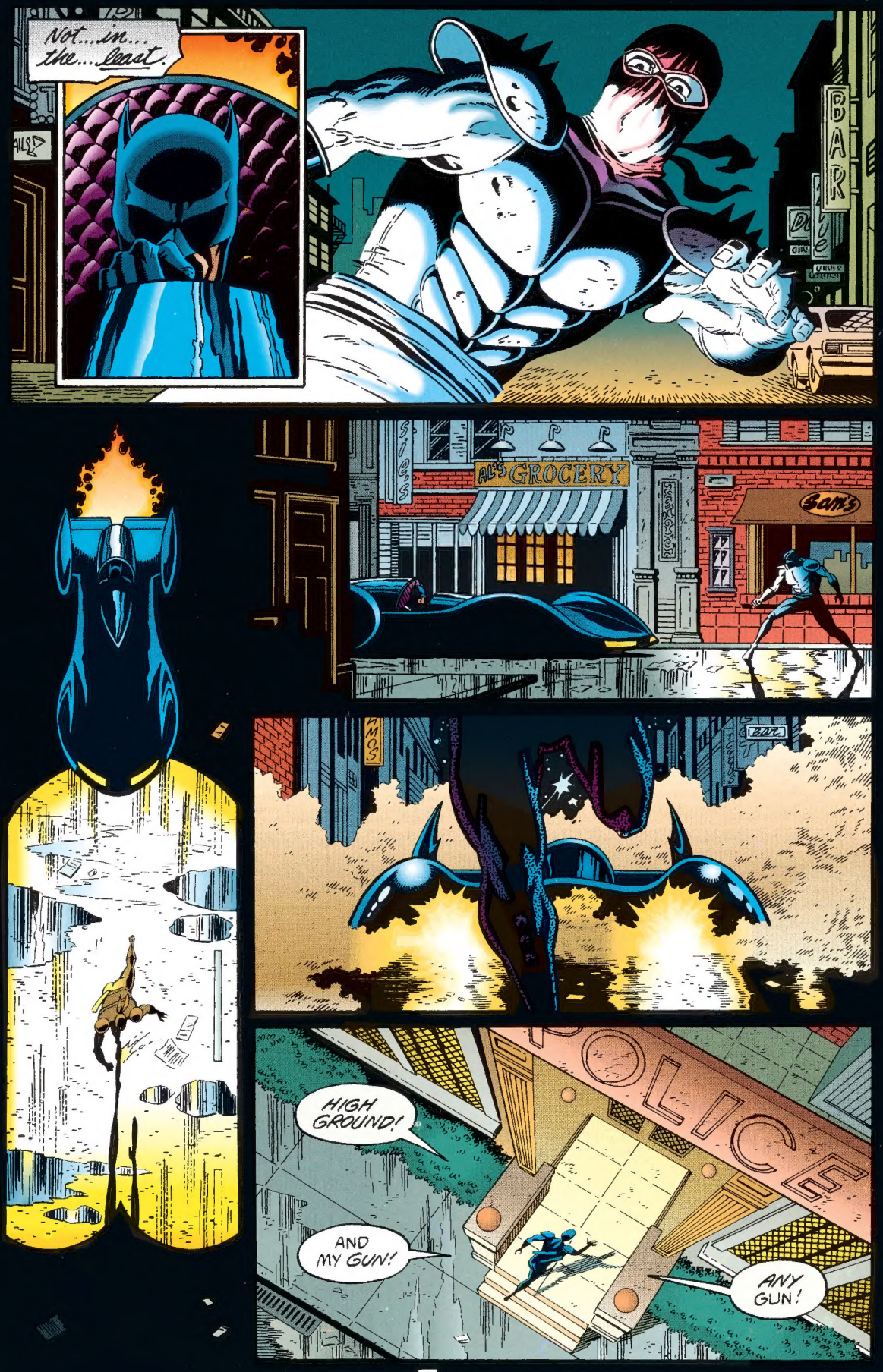
SHRRRPP
First blood.
Mine...
SHAKKT
...and he wants more.
SWFFFFFF
His swords...
...are too damned long.
SHUMP
Blue sparks.
Maybe a cracked rib...

Got to get rid of his swords...
KRATCH
...preferably from a distance.
SWFWFWFWFWF
SKANG
KTANG
WHA--?
Better.

UNPHH!
CHUD
WAP
Much better.
And the ribs are fine-- breathing normal.
Now he'll have to--
NO.
Not the swords again!
YOU'RE DEAD!
YOU'RE ALREADY IN THE GROUND, LIKE A WET BAG OF ROTTEN--
SH-TRAK
SAPT

WE'RE EVEN.
GIVE HIM HELL ON YOUR OWN NOW.
More than hell.
But...?
SKREEEEE
STRANGE WAS WRONG! I'M NOT BETTER THAN HIM-- NOT EVEN AS GOOD--BUT I GOT AWAY!
I'M STILL FREE!
I CAN STILL REACH HIGH GROUND--
VROOOOM
BEEP BEEP
WHUMP
--AND NAIL HIM!
SKREEEEE
JUST NEED MY GUN-- ON HIGH GROUND-- AND--

WHRAWW
Ernie's
KRUNSCH
TEESH
H-HE'S... HE'S CRAZY..


Not...in...the...least.
BAR
AL'S GROCERY
Sam's
BAR
HIGH GROUND!
AND MY GUN!
ANY GUN!

M-MADE IT! I'M HERE!
I CAN STILL DO IT--STILL KILL!
WHO THE--?
KINDA MATCHES THE DESCRIPTION OF...YEAH...
...THE NIGHT-SCOURGE.
FREEZE!
NO! IT'S ME--MAX CORT!
HEY... HE IS CORT...
HE'S BOTH.
HE'S MAX CORT--AND MAX CORT IS THE NIGHT-SCOURGE.
HE ALSO ABDUCTED THE MAYOR'S DAUGHTER AND FRAMED ME FOR THE CRIME--
--AS CAPTAIN JAMES GORDON WILL CONFIRM.
YES--AND HE'S GUILTY! A VIGILANTE! SHOOT TO KILL! THE MOON! BIG! SILVER! RELAXED! BETTER THAN HIM! I'M--
THE BATMAN--HERE?!
CAR 23 TO DISPATCHER--WE HIT THE BATMAN--BODY FELL OFF THE TRI-SECTOR BRIDGE--SEND DIVERS AND BACKUP SEARCH CREWS.
FINISH HIM OFF! YOU'RE COPS! KILL HIM!!
YOU WERE JUST SHOT--?
NO.

THE MAN WHO FRAMED HIM WAS SHOT, WEARING A COUNTERFEIT BAT-COSTUME-- DR. HUGO STRANGE.
PUT YOUR GUNS AWAY, MEN--I'LL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.
I'LL TAKE THAT GUN!
YOU DON'T THINK SO, CAPTAIN GORDON?!
THE BATMAN IS GUILTY OF NOTHING, AND THE "NIGHT-SCOURGE" IS HARDLY A THREAT AT THIS--
YOU TRAITOR! YOU HELPED HIM! YOU'RE BAD FOR MORALE! YOU'RE DEAD MEA--
BRAM
BRAM
BRAM
AGH-K!
BRAM
they thought one was me!..
...and the other, the same.
AND BATMAN WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE RESCUE OF MY DAUGHTER?
HE'S THE ONE WHO LED US TO STRANGE, SIR.
I SEE...

WELL--ABOUT THIS VIGILANTE TASK FORCE, CAPTAIN GORDON...WHILE WE CERTAINLY CAN'T CONDONE THE ACTIONS OF ANY VIGILANTE...
...PERHAPS IT MIGHT BE MORE PRODUCTIVE TO CONCENTRATE OUR EFFORTS ON THE REAL CRIMINALS, HM?
I THINK I UNDERSTAND, MR. MAYOR.
AND ONE LAST THING, CAPTAIN...
KEEP IT UP, AND ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'RE LIABLE TO BE APPOINTED COMMISSIONER.
DRAGGED THE RIVER.
NO SIGN OF STRANGE'S BODY.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S DEAD, WASHED OUT TO SEA.
OR JUST WOUNDED--AND ON THE RUN, OR IN HIDING.
THERE IS THAT POSSIBILITY.
TIME WILL TELL.
BUT FOR NOW, THE HEAT'S OFF.
YOU'VE MADE A GOOD START IN COMING TO TERMS WITH THE POLICE, AND DEFINITELY WITH THE MAYOR...
BUT THERE'LL ALWAYS BE COPS WHO RESENT YOU, AND I DON'T BLAME THEM.
NEITHER DO I.
AND THERE'LL ALWAYS BE POLITICIANS DUSTING OFF THE VIGILANTE ISSUE EVERY ELECTION SEASON.
THEM, I DO BLAME.
SO DO I.
STILL, PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT AND MAYBE WE'LL MAKE IT MORE OPEN AND PERMANENT--BY PAINTING A BAT ON THIS BEACON.
PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT, CAPTAIN, AND NEVER BECOME A POLITICIAN.
I NEED YOU.
HNH.
And this city, God help it...
...needs him.
THE END